

**News Release****Communications New Brunswick****N.B. Human Rights Commission****International Day of Disabled Persons (04/11/30)**

NB 1363

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FREDERICTON (CNB) -- The following statement was issued today by Alanna Palmer, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, to mark the International Day of Disabled Persons, Dec. 3.

"Dec. 3 is the International Day of Disabled Persons. This day was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1992 to celebrate and acknowledge the experience and capabilities of people with disabilities.

"This day has a special significance for us at the Human Rights Commission, since physical and mental disability are the most frequent grounds of complaint under the *Human Rights Act*. In 2003-2004, they represented 38 per cent of our case load. Examples of disability include addiction, AIDS, depression, diabetes, epilepsy, learning disorders, ADHD and reliance on a wheelchair.

"Employers and service providers have a legal duty to accommodate the needs of people with a disability so that they are not penalized by policies, practices and facilities. Individual assessment, flexibility and reasonableness are the keys to understanding this duty. Accommodation may include wheelchair ramps, sick leave, teaching aids and adjusting job duties; however, there is no need to undergo undue hardship or to sacrifice legitimate objectives.

"For more information, I invite employers to consult our new guideline on accommodating disability. It is available on our website at: <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp>.

"Improving opportunities for people with disabilities is not just about costs and duties. It is also profitable. Studies have shown that accommodation benefits businesses through reduced turnover, recruitment and training costs, improved morale and an expanded recruitment pool. In the United States, the federally funded Job Accommodation Network estimates that an employer receives \$34 in benefits for every dollar spent on accommodating workers with a disability.

"Having said that, I should add that many disabled workers need little or no accommodation, and surveys show that most employers find accommodation relatively inexpensive and easy.

"The barriers faced by persons with disabilities may be objects, attitudes or policies. Whatever form they take, I invite New Brunswickers to challenge these barriers, not just because they are unfair, but also because they are obstacles to business profitability and to our prosperity as a society."

04/11/30

MEDIA CONTACT: Alanna Palmer, chair, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2301 or 1-888-471-2233. The guideline mentioned in the statement can be found at:

<http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/Guideline-on-Accommodating-Disability-at-Work.pdf>

04/11/30

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